

PORTRAIT OF AN ARTIST

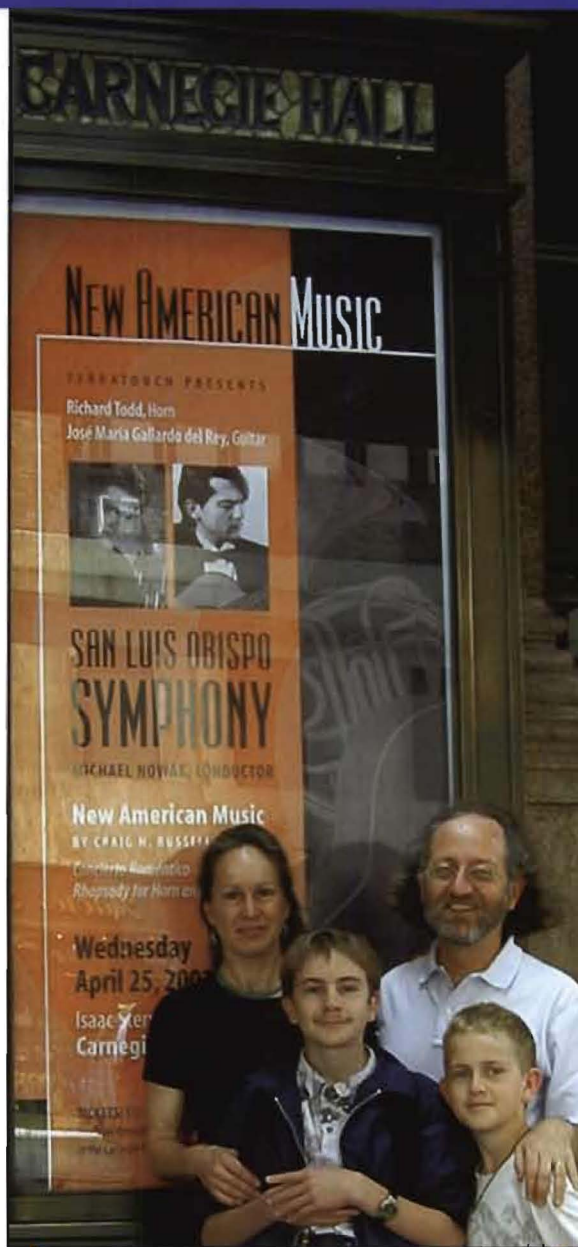
As a university known best for its excellence in agricultural, technical, and science disciplines, Cal Poly is also proud of a diverse faculty in its College of Liberal Arts. Their gifts range from practical experience in journalism and graphic communication to talents in the performing and fine arts.

One faculty member who represents the best the college—and Cal Poly—has to offer is Music Professor Craig Russell.

Teacher, scholar, composer, and performer Russell was awarded a Cal Poly distinguished teacher award in 1986 and received an outstanding professor award from the California State University system in 1995. He is the recipient of major grants from the Fulbright Commission, Spain's Ministry of Culture, the California Council for the Humanities, and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

"Music is my life's blood," Russell says. "I want to make the thrill and passion of music available to all Cal Poly students—whether they become dairy farmers or rocket scientists."

Russell started out his college career as a physics major at the University of New Mexico. Between classes he played guitar in the music department's practice rooms. Hearing him one day, renowned Music



Craig Russell in New York with his wife, Astrid, and sons Peter (left) and Loren.

(Photo courtesy Craig Russell)

Professor Hector Garcia told others that he sincerely hoped that that particularly "hopeless" student would never ask him for lessons. Within a week, Garcia heard knocking at his office door. He was dismayed to find Russell standing before him, asking for help.

During the course of the visit the professor's impression of the young student softened and he agreed to tutor Russell. Russell was to learn years later that Garcia was not paid for the lessons, but continued to tutor him because he sensed in Russell his own love of music. By the end of his junior year, Russell changed his major from physics to music performance in guitar and lute.

Russell's artistic career was again furthered by a chance encounter with a second instructor in a general education course—"Just part of the curriculum," he says. Within the first 10 minutes of Susan Patrick's first lecture, Russell began charting an entirely new life course. Patrick brought the year 1105 to life for him and ignited his passion as a music historian—an interest he would develop during his Cal Poly career.

As a graduate student at the University of North Carolina, Russell studied the works of Santiago de Murcia, an early 18th century Mexican composer. From his research, Russell saw that sections were missing from de Murcia's transcripts and documents. A colleague tracked down original works and transcripts to a private attic



1993

The Recreation Center,
funded by student fees



1993

A workout in the
Rec Center pool

archive in Mexico City, and these were made available to Russell, opening up 18th century Mexican musicians to other composers and performers.

After completing international study courses and his doctoral program, Russell came to Cal Poly's College of Liberal Arts' music program in 1982. "On a serendipitous note," Russell smiles, he was introduced to the world-famous performing group Chanticleer. Realizing immediately that their performing style blended perfectly with his new composition pieces based on the 1764 works by Ignacio de Jerusalem, he asked the group to assist him in producing the Grammy-nominated "Mexican Baroque" and what was to become the much-acclaimed "Matins for the Virgin of Guadalupe."

This spring the San Luis Obispo Symphony performed two of his compositions, "Concierto Romantico" (a guitar concerto) and "Rhapsody for Horn and Orchestra," at Carnegie Hall in New York City.

Hearing his compositions played there was "a dream come true," says Russell.

Professor Garcia, now elderly, was unable to attend the concert in person.

"But he was there in my heart," Russell says.



FIFTY YEARS OF LIBERAL ARTS EVOLUTION



he history of liberal arts at Cal Poly mirrors the evolution of the university and of academic disciplines in American society following World War II. During the middle of the century, the humanities and sciences at Cal Poly formed a single division variously titled "Science and Humanities," "Liberal Arts," and "Arts and Sciences."

These were classic names for the collection of disciplines once known as the trivium (grammar, rhetoric, and logic) and quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy), which characterized the curricula of European medieval universities. The role of the liberal arts at Cal Poly was then what it is, in part, now—to provide instruction in basic skills (writing and speaking) and knowledge known as general education.

At the same time, many interpreted the language of California's education code to mean that most liberal arts disciplines should never grow into majors in their own right. English was the only traditional liberal arts major in the Division of Applied Arts created in 1962. However, cultural changes in American society in the 1960s created the School of Communicative Arts and Humanities in 1970. Speech and history became majors, and art, foreign languages, and philosophy (without majors) were introduced.

Two important watersheds for the school in the 1980s were the elaboration of the mission of Cal Poly as a polytechnic "and comprehensive" university and the promulgation of more rigorous general education requirements. The first justified more traditionally philosophic liberal arts majors in the school—namely music, philosophy, theater, and modern languages and literatures. The second affirmed the importance for liberal arts students of some advanced understanding of technology and the importance for technical and professional students of advanced understanding of the aesthetic, social, and cultural dimensions of life.

In the last quarter of the 20th century, regional, national, and global demands for cross- and interdisciplinary cooperation toward the solution of complex problems became sufficiently compelling to blur old distinctions between the philosophic and the applied. Today, the College of Liberal Arts includes programs such as graphic communication and journalism, in addition to more philosophic ones. More important, no department is exclusively either.

Finally, the college has evolved into a mature partner for its technical and professional counterparts, which define the uniqueness of Cal Poly but which ignore human aesthetic, ethnical, and social contexts at their peril.



1990s
Graduates line the steps of
what is now the Orfalea
College of Business.



1995
The Poultry Science Instructional Center opens.